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LAKE LOUISE PLANNING DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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The Interim Report, released in February of this year, was the second public report prepared by the three consultants hired by Parks Canada, to prepare a Development Plan for the Lake Louise Visitor Centre.


The main purpose of this flyer, is to provide a summary of public response to the consultants' report. It also outlines the next and final steps for the completion of the Lake Louise Development Planning Project.

Open house public meetings were held during March of this year in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Banff/Lake Louise and Vancouver. They provided an informal atmosphere for interested people to review the displays illustrating the Interim Report and to discuss it with Parks Canada staff and the consultants. Although the total attendance by the public was not as great as anticipated, the approximately 1000 people who did come appeared to be well-informed and brought forward constructive ideas and concerns.

There were also more than 400 letters and briefs from individuals and groups representing large memberships, sent directly to Parks Canada in response to the Interim Report. These expressed additional public concerns regarding the Lake Louise project.

The Interim Report contained three main sections, The Immediate Action Plan, Alternative Plans for Future Development (Development Plan), and Management Policies.

Although there were variances in the opinions of the public as to what should be done or permitted at Lake Louise, the great majority indicated that some improvements were necessary and cited the existing inadequacies evident to them. Some stated a disbelief that anything would ever happen and based their thinking on the fact that very little has ever come of previous planning studies. However, many people did express an appreciation of the opportunities to provide their input at this time.



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There was overwhelming support for the general concept and contents of most of the Immediate Action Plan. It listed facilities and infrastructure improvements designed to improve current problems associated with serving day visitors and residents. The Immediate Action Plan recommended facilities such as improved staff housing, improved transportation and municipal services, eliminating level crossings of the railway line, a public transit system, a visitor reception/information centre and retail facilities. Many individuals in support of the Action Plan recommended some improvements to it and the consultants are making revisions as a result.

Most people agreed that a public transit system to the lakeside would be a good idea. Although many did not state a preference between a bus, gondola, or tram system, they indicated they would be prepared to accept a choice based on economic and technical criteria. Many suggested that Moraine Lake should also be added as a destination for a public transit system. The general indication was that most would be willing to pay some fee for public transit, but that Parks Canada should subsidize the operation if necessary to keep the cost to the individual user low.

Staff housing was acknowledged as being in need of immediate attention to improve the inadequacy and overcrowding which exists. Most respondents agreed with the consultants that residents should not be allowed to own and build up equity in housing in a National Park. This was not the feeling of present residents of Lake Louise, who generally felt strongly that they should be permitted to own their houses.

Interpretation of the natural environment at Lake Louise was also brought forward by many as needing considerable emphasis, as indicated by the strong support for the proposed Parks Reception and Interpretation Centre.

The Development Plan proposed three alternative concepts and locations where future overnight facilities might be developed: the Valley Floor Village Concept, the Lakeside Village Concept and the Three Village Concept.

With regard to the questions of visitor accommodation, there was considerable opposition to any more being permitted. Those who opposed it, stated environmental reasons as being their chief concern. Many others expressed their concern that the regional implications of development at Lake Louise were not being adequately considered. Some also stated they were skeptical of Parks Canada's ability to stop further growth after the 1600 beds were constructed.

Numerous individuals and groups were critical of Parks Canada for not directing the consultants to study a "low growth option". They felt that the

Immediate Action Plan in itself, represents such an option as it does not include development of additional accommodation beyond existing commitments. As a result of this public response, Parks Canada has directed the consultants to identify and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of not permitting construction of new additional overnight accommodation for visitors. Their final report will include this discussion as well as the plans for up to 1600 beds in accordance with previous direction.

Of the three alternatives presented, the majority stated a preference for the Valley Floor as the location for overnight accommodation development. A lesser, but substantial, number of people favoured the ski area for this development. They cited the advantages of winter skiers having accommodation at the bottom of the slopes. Most people expressed strong opposition to further development of accommodation at the lakeside with only a very small percentage in favour.

A large number of people supported the need for appropriate management controls by Parks Canada in order to ensure a high quality of experience for visitors to Lake Louise.

The consultants have been considering all of the comments and suggestions made by public respondents as they continue their studies. The final plans prepared by the consultants should contain changes as a result of this input.

The Next Steps

The presentation of the final report to Parks Canada has been delayed in order for the consultants to investigate the low growth option and complete their other studies.

A revised schedule calls for them to present their plan to Parks Canada in July. It will be reviewed in conjunction with a major report on the environment in the area. This report, entitled "Initial Environment Evaluation" is near completion by Dr. Bruce Leeson, Western Region, Parks Canada. Parks Canada will then make its recommendations to the Minister responsible for National Parks, the Honourable John Fraser, Minister of the Environment.

The Minister will make public his views on the report and the recommendations which it contains. He will also announce the action which Parks Canada will be directed to take with respect to implementation of approved recommendations.

A summary of the consultants' recommendations contained in the final report will be sent to all those on the mailing lists for this project. Copies of

the complete consultants' final report and their back-up technical documents will be available in libraries and other locations for review by the public.

A second summary of public opinion, the Public Input Chart, phase II, outlining the specific concerns and how they were considered by the consultants in the preparation of their report, will also be sent out with the summary of the consultants' recommendations.

Acknowledgements

The consultants' Interim Planning Report, January 1979, contained reproductions of photographs made available to Parks Canada by the Archives of the Canadian Rockies and the Corporate Archives of Canadian Pacific Railway.

Credit for their use was inadvertently not provided in the Report itself. Parks Canada and the consultants (IBI Group, Reid Crowther & Partners Ltd., DeLeuw Cather Ltd.) therefore wish to thank and acknowledge the Archives of the Canadian Rockies and Canadian Pacific Railway for their cooperation in providing the following photographs:

1. Deer Lodge in 1928 (facing title page) Archives of Canadian Rockies
2. Laggan Station in 1890 (page 4) Archives of Canadian Rockies
3. Lake Louise Rail Car (page 28) Canadian Pacific Railway

